

<http://www.washingtonsblog.com/2011/07/mainstream-media-presstitutes-for-the-rich-and-powerful.html>

While the Rupert Murdoch scandal is justifiably front-page news, there is a much wider problem with the mainstream media.

Purchasing Reporters

Famed Watergate reporter Carl Bernstein says the CIA has already bought and paid for many successful journalists.

A CIA operative allegedly told Washington Post editor Philip Graham ? in a conversation about the willingness of journalists to peddle CIA propaganda and cover stories:

You could get a journalist cheaper than a good call girl, for a couple hundred dollars a month.

The Church Committee found that the CIA submitted stories to the American press:

The New York Times discusses in a matter-of-fact way the use of mainstream writers by the CIA to spread messages.

The government is paying off reporters to spread disinformation.

A 4-part BBC documentary called the ?Century of the Self? shows that an American ? Freud?s nephew, Edward Bernays ? created the modern field of manipulation of public perceptions, and the U.S. government has extensively used his techniques.

The Independent discusses allegations of American propaganda.

One of the premier writers on journalism says the U.S. has used widespread propaganda.

Indeed, an expert on propaganda testified under oath during trial that the CIA employs THOUSANDS of reporters and OWNS its own media organizations (the expert has an impressive background).

Of course, the Web has become a huge media force, and the Pentagon and other government agencies have their hand in that as well.

Second-Hand Propaganda for the Rich and Powerful

But stories directly crafted by CIA and other government employees isn't the only form of prostitution.

Popular MSNBC anchor Cenk Uygur was recently told to tone down his attacks on the establishment because the head of the network reminded him, "we're part of the establishment."

Newseek's Evan Thomas admitted in 2009:

By definition, establishments believe in propping up the existing order. Members of the ruling class have a vested interest in keeping things pretty much the way they are. Safeguarding the status quo, protecting traditional institutions, can be healthy and useful, stabilizing and reassuring?

"If you are of the establishment persuasion (and I am). . . ."

Virtually all mainstream reporters are "establishment" journalists like Thomas.

The Pew Research Center study on the coverage of the crisis found that the media has largely parroted what the White House and Wall Street were saying.

The government, Wall Street and media all dispense happy talk when there is an economic crash.

Financial insider and commentator Yves Smith wrote an essay entitled "MSM Reporting as Propaganda" arguing that the government has been using propaganda to make people think that things are getting better, no one is angry, and "therefore" no one should get upset:

The message, quite overtly, is: if you are pissed, you are in a minority. The country has moved on. Things are getting better, get with the program?

Per the social psychology research, this "you are in a minority, you are wrong" message DOES dissuade a lot of people. It is remarkably poisonous. And it discourages people from taking concrete action.

Arianna Huffington points out:

There is something in the current DC/NY culture that equates a lack of unthinking boosterism with a lack of patriotism. As if not being drunk on the latest Dow gains is somehow un-American. Or if "shock doctrine" medicine is being pedaled by the powers-that-be (and see this), then overly fatalistic assessments are trumpeted on every channel.

And the corporate media is instrumental in spreading the lies which support war.

(Unknown artist)

Painting by Anthony Freda: www.AnthonyFreda.com.

As I noted in 2009:

There are five reasons that the mainstream media is worthless.

1. Self-Censorship by Journalists

Initially, there is tremendous self-censorship by journalists.

For example, several months after 9/11, famed news anchor Dan Rather told the BBC that American reporters were practicing "a form of self-censorship":

There was a time in South Africa that people would put flaming tires around peoples' necks if they dissented. And in some ways the fear is that you will be necklaced here, you will have a flaming tire of lack of patriotism put around your neck. Now it is that fear that keeps journalists from asking the toughest of the tough questions?. And again, I am humbled to say, I do not except myself from this criticism.

What we are talking about here ? whether one wants to recognise it or not, or call it by its proper name or not ? is a form of self-censorship.

Keith Olbermann agreed that there is self-censorship in the American media, and that:

You can rock the boat, but you can never say that the entire ocean is in trouble ?. You cannot say: By the way, there's something wrong with our ?. system.

As former Washington Post columnist Dan Froomkin wrote in 2006:

Mainstream-media political journalism is in danger of becoming increasingly irrelevant, but not because of the Internet, or even Comedy Central. The threat comes from inside. It comes from journalists being afraid to do what journalists were put on this green earth to do. . . .

There's the intense pressure to maintain access to insider sources, even as those sources become

ridiculously unrevealing and oversensitive. There's the fear of being labeled partisan if one's bullshit-calling isn't meted out in precisely equal increments along the political spectrum.

If mainstream-media political journalists don't start calling bullshit more often, then we do risk losing our primacy ? if not to the comedians then to the bloggers.

I still believe that no one is fundamentally more capable of first-rate bullshit-calling than a well-informed beat reporter ? whatever their beat. We just need to get the editors, or the corporate culture, or the self-censorship ? or whatever it is ? out of the way.

2. Censorship by Higher-Ups

If journalists do want to speak out about an issue, they also are subject to tremendous pressure by their editors or producers to kill the story.

The Pulitzer prize-winning reporter who uncovered the Iraq prison torture scandal and the Mai Lai massacre in Vietnam, Seymour Hersh, said:

?All of the institutions we thought would protect us ? particularly the press, but also the military, the bureaucracy, the Congress ? they have failed. The courts . . . the jury's not in yet on the courts. So all the things that we expect would normally carry us through didn't. The biggest failure, I would argue, is the press, because that's the most glaring?.

Q: What can be done to fix the (media) situation?

[Long pause] You'd have to fire or execute ninety percent of the editors and executives. You'd actually have to start promoting people from the newsrooms to be editors who you didn't think you could control. And they're not going to do that.?

In fact many journalists are warning that the true story is not being reported. See this announcement and this talk.

And a series of interviews with award-winning journalists also documents censorship of certain stories by media editors and owners (and see these samples).

There are many reasons for censorship by media higher-ups.

One is money.

The media has a strong monetary interest to avoid controversial topics in general. It has always been true that advertisers discourage stories which challenge corporate power. Indeed, a 2003 survey reveals that 35% of reporters and news executives themselves admitted that journalists avoid newsworthy stories if "the story would be embarrassing or damaging to the financial interests of a news organization's owners or parent company."

In addition, the government has allowed tremendous consolidation in ownership of the airwaves during the past decade.

Dan Rather has slammed media consolidation:

Likening media consolidation to that of the banking industry, Rather claimed that "roughly 80 percent" of the media is controlled by no more than six, and possibly as few as four, corporations.

This is documented by the following must-see charts prepared by:

Media Channel

The Nation <http://www.thenation.com>

Free Press <http://www.freepress.net>

And check out this list of interlocking directorates of big media companies from Fairness and Accuracy in Media, and this resource from the Columbia Journalism Review to research a particular company.

This image gives a sense of the decline in diversity in media ownership over the last couple of decades:

The large media players stand to gain billions of dollars in profits if the Obama administration continues to allow monopoly ownership of the airwaves by a handful of players. The media giants know who butters their bread. So there is a spoken or tacit agreement: if the media cover the administration in a favorable light, the MSM will continue to be the receiver of the government's goodies.

3. Drumming Up Support for War

In addition, the owners of American media companies have long actively played a part in drumming up support for war.

It is painfully obvious that the large news outlets studiously avoided any real criticism of the

government's claims in the run up to the Iraq war. It is painfully obvious that the large American media companies acted as lapdogs and stenographers for the government's war agenda.

Veteran reporter Bill Moyers criticized the corporate media for parroting the obviously false link between 9/11 and Iraq (and the false claims that Iraq possessed WMDs) which the administration made in the run up to the Iraq war, and concluded that the false information was not challenged because:

“the [mainstream] media had been cheerleaders for the White House from the beginning and were simply continuing to rally the public behind the President ? no questions asked.”

And as NBC News' David Gregory (later promoted to host Meet the Press) said:

“I think there are a lot of critics who think that . . . if we did not stand up [in the run-up to the war] and say “this is bogus, and you're a liar, and why are you doing this,” that we didn't do our job. I respectfully disagree. It's not our role”

But this is nothing new. In fact, the large media companies have drummed up support for all previous wars.

For example, Hearst helped drum up support for the Spanish-American War.

And an official summary of America's overthrow of the democratically-elected president of Iran in the 1950's states, “In cooperation with the Department of State, CIA had several articles planted in major American newspapers and magazines which, when reproduced in Iran, had the desired psychological effect in Iran and contributed to the war of nerves against Mossadeq.” (page x)

The mainstream media also may have played footsie with the U.S. government right before Pearl Harbor. Specifically, a highly-praised historian (Bob Stineet) argues that the Army's Chief of Staff informed the Washington bureau chiefs of the major newspapers and magazines of the impending Pearl Harbor attack BEFORE IT OCCURRED, and swore them to an oath of secrecy, which the media honored (page 361) .

And the military-media alliance has continued without a break (as a highly-respected journalist says, “viewers may be taken aback to see the grotesque extent to which US presidents and American news media have jointly shouldered key propaganda chores for war launches during the last five decades.”)

As the mainstream British paper, the Independent, writes:

There is a concerted strategy to manipulate global perception. And the mass media are operating as its compliant assistants, failing both to resist it and to expose it. The sheer ease with which this machinery has been able to do its work reflects a creeping structural weakness which now afflicts the production of our news.

The article in the Independent discusses the use of 'black propaganda' by the U.S. government, which is then parroted by the media without analysis; for example, the government forged a letter from al Zargawi to the 'inner circle' of al-Qaeda's leadership, urging them to accept that the best way to beat US forces in Iraq was effectively to start a civil war, which was then publicized without question by the media..

So why has the American press has consistently served the elites in disseminating their false justifications for war?

One of the reasons is because the large media companies are owned by those who support the militarist agenda or even directly profit from war and terror (for example, NBC which is being sold to Comcast was owned by General Electric, one of the largest defense contractors in the world which directly profits from war, terrorism and chaos).

Another seems to be an unspoken rule that the media will not criticize the government's imperial war agenda.

And the media support isn't just for war: it is also for various other shenanigans by the powerful. For example, a BBC documentary proves:

There was 'a planned coup in the USA in 1933 by a group of right-wing American businessmen The coup was aimed at toppling President Franklin D Roosevelt with the help of half-a-million war veterans. The plotters, who were alleged to involve some of the most famous families in America, (owners of Heinz, Birds Eye, Goodtea, Maxwell Hse & George Bush's Grandfather, Prescott) believed that their country should adopt the policies of Hitler and Mussolini to beat the great depression.'

Moreover, 'the tycoons told the general who they asked to carry out the coup that the American people would accept the new government because they controlled all the newspapers.'

See also this book.

Have you ever heard of this scheme before? It was certainly a very large one. And if the conspirators

controlled the newspapers then, how much worse is it today with media consolidation?

4. Access

Politico reveals:

For \$25,000 to \$250,000, The Washington Post has offered lobbyists and association executives off-the-record, nonconfrontational access to "those powerful few": Obama administration officials, members of Congress, and "at first" even the paper's own reporters and editors?

The offer "which essentially turns a news organization into a facilitator for private lobbyist-official encounters" was a new sign of the lengths to which news organizations will go to find revenue at a time when most newspapers are struggling for survival.

That may be one reason that the mainstream news commentators hate bloggers so much. The more people who get their news from blogs instead of mainstream news sources, the smaller their audience, and the less the MSM can charge for the kind of "nonconfrontational access" which leads to puff pieces for the big boys.

5. Censorship by the Government

Finally, as if the media's own interest in promoting war is not strong enough, the government has exerted tremendous pressure on the media to report things a certain way. Indeed, at times the government has thrown media owners and reporters in jail if they've been too critical. The media companies have felt great pressure from the government to kill any real questioning of the endless wars.

For example, Dan Rather said, regarding American media, "What you have is a miniature version of what you have in totalitarian states".

Tom Brokaw said "all wars are based on propaganda."

And the head of CNN said:

There was "almost a patriotism police" after 9/11 and when the network showed [things critical of the administration's policies] it would get phone calls from advertisers and the administration and "big people in corporations were calling up and saying, "You're being anti-American here."

Indeed, former military analyst and famed Pentagon Papers whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg said that

the government has ordered the media not to cover 9/11:

Ellsberg seemed hardly surprised that today's American mainstream broadcast media has so far failed to take [former FBI translator and 9/11 whistleblower Sibel] Edmonds up on her offer, despite the blockbuster nature of her allegations [which Ellsberg calls "far more explosive than the Pentagon Papers"].

As Edmonds has also alluded, Ellsberg pointed to the New York Times, who sat on the NSA spying story for over a year when they could have put it out before the 2004 election, which might have changed the outcome.

There will be phone calls going out to the media saying "don't even think of touching it, you will be prosecuted for violating national security," he told us.

* * *

I am confident that there is conversation inside the Government as to how do we deal with Sibel??? contends Ellsberg. The first line of defense is to ensure that she doesn't get into the media. I think any outlet that thought of using her materials would go to the government and they would be told "don't touch this"